DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 465 CS 203 683

AUTHOR Teich, Nathaniel
TITLE Relations with Teachers outside College Writing Programs: Coordination with Teachers in Other Disciplines and in Public Schools.
PUB DATE Mar 77
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (28th, Kansas City, Missouri, March 31-April 2, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; College High School Cooperation; *Composition Skills (Literary); English Departments; *English Instruction; Higher Education; Information Networks; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Interinstitutional Cooperation; Junior Colleges; Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS Oregon

ABSTRACT

Writing teachers at the University of Oregon have established working relations in three different ways with teachers outside their department. First, they have set up sections of a required composition course to be taught in conjunction with courses in other disciplines; workshops to develop skills in handling students' writing are conducted for the faculty members who teach the related courses in other disciplines. Second, they have established a network for coordinating activities and sharing information among two-year and four-year colleges throughout Oregon. Finally, they have formed a committee that includes college and secondary composition teachers, for the purpose of developing a statewide network to facilitate the continuing professional education of writing teachers. (GW)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED145465

Nathaniel Teich
Department of English
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Nathaniel Teich
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

Relations with Teachers Outside College Writing Programs: Coordination with Teachers in Other Disciplines and in Public Schools

College writing teachers and writing program administrators should make special efforts to establish new working relations with teachers outside writing programs. Our task should be to get teachers at all levels to recognize and assume their responsibilities for the literacy of their students. Writing instruction, including competence in expository and argumentative writing, should be the responsibility of all teachers, not just composition teachers.

To accomplish this task, we must cooperate not only with colleagues in other disciplines on the college campus, but also with other writing programs in two- and four-year colleges around us, and especially with public school teachers and administrators.

Since the "writing crisis" became a media event in 1974, a more favorable climate of opinion has been developing for increasing and improving writing instruction. To reach and convince others of their responsibilities for literacy, we must take advantage of opportunities to keep writing in the forefront of current educational concerns. Our audience should not be limited to faculty and students on campus, but include public school teachers, school boards, legislators, and the general public.

Unfortunately there are still occasions, as I listen to or read what some writing teachers are saying, when I wonder if there is any other profession in which specialists proclaim in public that the tools and skills basic to their discipline are useless and need not be taught to students?

Fortunately in Oregon as elsewhere, there are many activities underway, as writing teachers are joined by colleagues in other disciplines and

CS 003 683

people outside the schools. Let me provide some brief examples of efforts in Oregon to involve those outside writing programs in the interdisciplinary teaching of composition; to coordinate writing programs among two- and four-year public colleges in the state; and to cooperate with secondary school writing teachers, particularly to contribute to inservice activities.

At the University of Oregon in 1975, under a grant from the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission, we set up special interdisciplinary writing sections of our first required composition course. These sections were designed in conjunction with introductory or survey courses in such disciplines as art history, business, history, political science, and sociology. We found that students' interest and performance were high when their writing assignments were related to the subject matter of courses in other disciplines. However, we encountered problems in scheduling, enrollment, and staffing that make this experiment difficult to continue, which may not be the case at a small college.

For faculty in the other disciplines who were teaching the courses tied to the interdisciplinary writing sections and for other faculty outside the English department, we offered short four-day workshops in summer and fall terms to develop their skills in handling students' writing in their courses. For discussion we used student papers the participants submitted from their courses. The workshops not only provided an intensive review of mechanical and organizational problems encountered in expository writing, but also produced a greater recognition of the need to structure writing assignments clearly and aid students with their pre-writing problems. In a follow-up interview during the next year, some participants reported that student papers served as helpful models to set expectations in a class.

At Oregon State University, separate departments and professional schools have set additional writing requirements. The school of forestry,

for example, has supported a resident writing instructor to set up proficiency tests and provide the regular faculty with training and assistance.

However, as successful and useful as such voluntary projects may be at medium-sized universities like Oregon and Oregon State, they will have little impact beyond the few participants; at best they will increase for a few the awareness of writing issues. In contrast, at two small, four-year, teaching-oriented colleges in our system (1400 and 4500 students), where the entire faculty can meet in one classroom, extensive interdepartmental coordination of writing is being developed. On our research-oriented campus of 17,000 with departments facing increasing class sizes and decreasing staffing, we cannot -- as those of you in similar situations cannot -- restrict our activities to trying to convince our colleagues in other disciplines who are turning more to computer-graded exams, to give and grade more essays.

By coordinating activities and sharing information on a state-wide basis, those of us in writing programs at the public colleges and community colleges in Oregon have made noticeable gains. In 1974, a state-wide ad hoc Committee on Competencies in English Composition was charged with improving articulation between the two- and four-year colleges. What we produced in June, 1976 was a comprehensive report with 13 recommendations to coordinate and emphasize writing not only in colleges but at all grade levels, K - 12 as well.

In addition to recommending common procedures, course objectives, and minimal competencies for expository writing in college composition courses, more than half of the recommendations are directed toward improving teaching and fostering cooperation among writing teachers from elementary levels through college. Most important, we have broadened the committee to include secondary writing teachers for a cooperative project of developing a state-wide network to facilitate continuing professional education of writing teachers, with such activities as inservice, summer workshops, and exchange

of information through regional campus centers. The University of California, Berkeley/Bay Area Writing Project has provided the model for this project.

What I want to stress as significant is how our committee moved eventually from concerns at the college level to those at secondary and elementary levels. If we can get higher entry-level skills, from better writing instruction at the elementary and secondary levels, many of our problems -- especially the financial drain of college remedial courses -- will be mitigated. Moreover, since colleges are responsible for teacher preparation, we must assume the leadership in breaking the cycle of sending out teachers inadequately prepared in writing instruction who will be sending us more inadequate students. We must avoid pointing fingers to shift the blame onto public school teachers. We must provide better training in the teaching of writing and help to improve continuing p. . sional education of writing teachers at all levels.

By collaborating with our colleagues in other departments and at other levels of education, we should reach the goal of getting entire faculties, not just composition teachers, to assume responsibility for the literacy of students.